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Mike Finn

FROM PIGTOWN

TOMMY

(Slowly and with great relish. Savouring every syllable.) Long White Lob. Tamworth. Gloucester Old Spot. Cumberland. Belted Kentucky. Saddleback. Old Ulster. Lincolnshire Curlycoat. The pig—now there's one beautiful animal. Stout, proud, cheerful, loyal. Wallowing in the succulent pleasures of his calipygian rotundity! The man that isn't moved to poetry by the sight of a plump pig's arse isn't a real man! Lazy? Never! Dirty? Hardly! Misunderstood? Definitely! Dog me arse! Man's best friend is the pig! I should know. I've killed thousands of 'em. In a century and a half, fifty million porkers have met their end in this town. Pigtown. *(He removes his hat and blesses himself.)* Light o' heaven to their souls. *(He replaces his hat.)*

Tom Clohessy from Squeezegut Lane—Clocks for short—Pork Butcher. Up every mornin' at five o'clock. Five rashers, five sausages, half a black puddin' and I'm off! Ten paces and I'm on Athlunkard Street. In every house a pig buyer, in every yard some swine. Pig Street. *(He inhales deeply.)*

I loves the smell of pig swill in the mornin'! The pig is the saviour of the workin' man. Buy 'em small. Feed 'em shite. Sell 'em big. Extra cash when it's most wantin'. A pig is for Christmas, not just for life. He's the gentleman that'll pay the rent. With me clogs on me feet an' me knives under me oxter. I'm skipping up the streets and lanes of this town. Up past Dick Devane's and the Cathedral, past the Custom House and under Cannock's Clock. It's a minute slow—again. George's street before me—misty, silent and empty. My town. Pigtown. The pork butchers are the backbone of this town and don't you forget it! Not just this town. Oh no. Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev. I'm not coddin' ya. When the Tsar wanted to teach the Russians how to save their bacon, who did he call? The Pigtown pork butchers, that's who.

Every mornin' we march, like extras from a Lowery painting, toward the stone and tile palaces. Shaw's, O'Mara's, Denny's, Matterson's. Shrines to the Limerick rasher. And the sound. Oh, that sound—Ma-

dame Butterfly me bollix! The squeal of a pig as he slides along the bar towards his destiny is like the Hallelujah Chorus! Then, bam! (*He slams a cleaver onto the table.*) One blow to the back of the neck and the pig begins his journey to Sausageville. The pungent aroma of the singeing room and the bristles fall like leaves off a sycamore. Then off with the head, slice the carcass and out with the entrails. Blood flows rich and red, down the chute and into the veins of Pigtown. The pig is the most generous animal on God's earth. Ham and bacon. Rashers and sausages. Skirts, kidneys, liver, eyebones, backbones, pig's heads, pig's toes, lard. Bladders for footballs. Bristles for brushes and shit for roses. Nothin' wasted but the squeal. A fair lad, too. A classless beast. The crowned heads of Europe line their regal bellies with Limerick bacon and ham while the courtin' couples of Pigtown dream their dreams over pig's toes from Tracey's wrapped in last week's *Chronicle*. Limerick Bacon, famous from Quebec to Queensland and the pork butcher was king. (*Pause. His mood changes. Reflective.*) The pork butcher was king.